
Facilitation Guide

Caring Through Cancer

A Caregiver Support Group Training and Discussion Series



LOUISIANA
CANCER PREVENTION &
CONTROL PROGRAMS

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Acknowledgments

This facilitation guide was developed with the expertise and leadership of Dr. Mary Kathryn Gastinel, whose authorship, insight, and dedication made this resource possible. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor with over 20 years of professional practice and is the co-owner and founder of The Wellness Studio, LLC. Dr. Gastinel also has over five years of experience in psychosocial oncology with a focus on young adults and specializes in grief and bereavement counseling.

She co-founded her private practice, earned her master's degree and Ph.D., fought cancer alongside her husband, and founded two cancer-related nonprofit organizations in her husband's memory. Dr. Gastinel received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Alabama, and then went on to the University of New Orleans to receive her Masters and Ph.D. in Counseling.

She utilizes her personal experiences and insight with cancer patients to help others stricken with the disease. Dr. Gastinel's other speciality areas include general mental health concerns.

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Introduction

Cancer survivorship is a distinct and deeply personal phase of the cancer journey—one that begins at diagnosis and continues through and beyond treatment. As advances in screening and therapy improve outcomes, more individuals are living longer after cancer, navigating not only the physical effects of treatment but also the emotional, social, spiritual, and practical challenges that follow. Survivorship care, therefore, is not a single intervention but an ongoing, coordinated approach that supports healing, resilience, and quality of life.

This Facilitation Guide for the Caring Through Cancer Series is designed to equip facilitators with the structure, tools, and confidence to lead meaningful, patient-centered conversations and learning experiences. Whether delivered in clinical settings, community programs, or support groups, the series aims to foster connection, empower participants with knowledge, and promote self-advocacy in survivorship.

Grounded in evidence-informed practices and aligned with guidance from organizations such as the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and the American Society of Clinical Oncology, this series addresses core domains of survivorship care, including:

- Management of long-term and late effects
- Psychosocial well-being and mental health
- Health promotion and lifestyle behaviors
- Care coordination and survivorship care planning
- Financial and practical concerns
- Family, relationships, and community reintegration

This guide emphasizes a strengths-based, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive facilitation approach. Survivors and caregivers bring diverse experiences shaped by diagnosis type, treatment pathway, identity, support systems, and social determinants of health. Facilitators are encouraged to create inclusive environments where participants feel safe, heard, and respected.

Each session outline includes learning objectives, suggested discussion prompts, interactive activities, and resources to support continued learning. Adaptability is encouraged—facilitators may tailor content to meet the needs of specific populations, cancer types, or care settings.

Ultimately, this series is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: survivorship is not merely about living after cancer, but about living well. By fostering knowledge, connection, and empowerment, facilitators play a vital role in helping survivors navigate the path forward with confidence and hope.

Each session is comprised of learning objectives, a recorded webinar that is topic specific, as well as outlined agenda for facilitators to follow to achieve a meaningful experience for the participants. The goal is to have them view the webinar beforehand, then conduct a live round table discussion. This guide includes talking points, questions to ponder, and bulleted content to understanding the content of each session. It also includes learning assessment questions so the facilitator can assess and measure how the information is being absorbed.

The purpose of this guide is to be supportive and informative but having organic discussion and dialogue around these specific topics is key to connection and empowerment for the individuals who are participating, regardless of where they are on their survivorship journey.

Session 1 – Survivorship 101

Learning Objectives

1. Define the standard of care for cancer survivors (i.e., care plans, treatment summaries)
2. Gain knowledge of the mental health concerns that arise once individuals complete active treatment.
3. Understand the emotional impact of death and dying.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief and guilt associated with survivorship.

Recorded: Tuesday, September 26, 2025

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MNSrla0vTE>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Survivorship
5	Defining Survivorship and Psychosocial Oncology. We will define commonly used terms in this field.
10	Video clip – A Ted Talk of a Cancer Survivor sharing their experience and how it has impacted their mental health.
15	Processing the video clip through a discussion of common themes addressed and what could come up for someone watching and hearing this survivor's story.
10	How to implement psychosocial oncology services into routine cancer care and survivorship.
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Survivorship
10	Video clip – Ted Talk about the death and dying conversations at the end of someone's cancer journey.
10	How to implement bereavement and grief counseling techniques in clinical practice.
10	Myths and misconceptions of the death and dying experience and overall grief in survivorship.
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of the death and dying experience and overall grief in survivorship.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization).
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about survivorship and psychosocial oncology care
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: Build safety and normalize different levels of knowledge.

- What brought you to today's group?
- When you hear the word *cancer*, what's the first thing that comes to mind?
- What do you hope to understand better by the end of this session?
- On a scale from 1-10, how confident do you feel about understanding cancer right now?

Understanding the Content:

Purpose: Clarify foundational concepts without overwhelming the participants.

- What have you already heard about how cancer develops in the body?
- What feels most confusing or unclear about cancer right now?
- What's the difference between cancer type, stage, and grade—and which one do you want more clarity on?
- What myths or misconceptions about cancer have you encountered?
- What surprised you the most when you first learned about cancer?

Understanding Treatment:

Purpose: Normalize varied experiences and reduce comparison.

- What treatments have you heard of (e.g., surgery, chemo, radiation, immunotherapy)?
- What questions come up when you think about treatment options?
- What worries you most about treatment?
- What has helped you cope with uncertainty around treatment decisions?
- How do you balance learning enough without becoming overwhelmed?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and hope

- What's one takeaway from today's discussion?
- What's one question you still have?
- What feels a little lighter after today?
- What would be helpful to cover in a future group?
- What's one thing you can do for yourself after leaving today?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Normalize silence — not everyone needs to answer every question.
- Offer “pass” as an option.
- Reflect feelings more than facts when emotions arise.
- Keep medical explanations high-level unless asked for detail.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. When does the survivorship phase begin?
 - a. At diagnosis
 - b. At the start of treatment
 - c. At the end of treatment
 - d. After a second diagnosis
2. Which of the following is a risk factor for developing cancer?
 - a. Tobacco use
 - b. Excessive sun exposure
 - c. Family history
 - d. All of the above
3. What are some ways death and dying can affect someone emotionally?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with a survivor's feelings of guilt and grief?
5. Name one type of psychological therapy that can improve someone's mental health during their cancer experience.

Session 2 – Fear of Recurrence

Learning Objectives

1. Define the emotional impact of fear and anxiety in cancer care.
2. Gain knowledge of the ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making.
3. Understand the emotional impact of death and dying.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief associated with changes in cancer care.

Recorded Webinar: Friday, November 22, 2024

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qb76ghUDAE>

Link to missing clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5HQamrXISY>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Fear of recurrence
5	Defining the emotional impact of fear and anxiety in cancer care.
10	Video clip – Living Beyond Cancer
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making.
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Fear of Recurrence
10	Video clip – TedTalk “What almost dying taught me about living” Suleika Jaouad
10	How to implement coping strategies
10	Myths and misconceptions the emotional impacts of death and dying.
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of feelings of grief associated with changes in cancer care.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about the fear of recurrence.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: Build safety and normalize different levels of knowledge.

- What brought you to today's group?
- In one word or phrase, how has fear been showing up for you lately?
- What do you hope this group can offer you?
- What helps you feel safe enough to share in a group like this?

Understanding the Content:

Purpose: Clarify foundational concepts without overwhelming the participants.

- When did you first notice fear about cancer occurrence or recurrence?
- What situations, thoughts, or body sensations tend to trigger your fear?
- How does this fear show up for you—emotionally, physically, or behaviorally?
- What feels most frightening about the possibility of cancer returning or occurring?
- How has this fear changed over time?

Understanding Fear:

Purpose: To reduce isolation and shame.

- What do you think people misunderstand about fear of cancer recurrence?
- In what ways do you feel pressure to “be positive” or “move on”?
- How do you respond when others minimize your fears?
- What would you want others to understand about what this fear is really like?

Impact on Daily Life:

Purpose: To explore consequences without pathologizing.

- How does fear affect your sleep, relationships, or decision-making?
- Are there things you avoid because of fear?
- How does fear show up around scans, appointments, or bodily sensations?
- How has fear influenced how you see your future?

Coping Strategies:

Purpose: Focus on strengths and adaptive strategies.

- What have you found helpful when fear feels overwhelming?
- Are there moments when fear feels quieter? What's different then?
- What inner strengths have helped you get through uncertainty?
- What coping strategies have you tried that didn't help—and what did you learn from that?
- How do you balance being vigilant with living your life?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: To end sessions with containment and hope.

- What's one thing you're taking away from today's discussion?
- What helped you feel connected during this session?
- What is one small thing you can do this week to support yourself?
- What would you like to remind yourself when fear shows up again?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Normalize fear early: *"Many people here share this experience."*
- Allow silence—it often leads to deeper sharing.
- Redirect from reassurance-seeking to emotional processing.
- Offer grounding exercises when fear escalates.
- Emphasize living with fear, not eliminating it.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. How do you define the emotional impact of fear and anxiety in cancer care?
2. Which of the following best describes fear of recurrence?
 - a. A sign of weakness
 - b. A common and understandable response
 - c. Something that only happens when symptoms appear
3. What are some examples of the emotional impacts of death and dying?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief associated with changes in cancer care?
5. Dr. Gastinel discussed the Possibility vs.:
 - a. Consideration
 - b. Potential
 - c. Probability
 - d. Reality

Session 3 – Family Dynamics and Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define your family dynamics and understanding of relationships in your support system.
2. Gain knowledge of boundary setting, communication, and support.
3. Understand how death and dying can impact your family dynamics.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief and guilt that are placed on the family dynamics.

Recorded: Thursday, December 19, 2024

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JB0p8xyXS8>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Family Dynamics and Communication
5	Defining your family dynamics and understanding of relationships in your support system.
10	Video clip – TedTalk “How Can You Support a Loved One Through Cancer” Diane Thomas
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement communication skills
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Family Dynamics and Communication
10	Video clip – TedTalk How to Talk to Someone with Cancer Katie Deming
10	How to implement boundary setting
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of feelings of grief and guilt that are placed on the family dynamics.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about family dynamics and communication.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: To ease individuals into the discussion and establish safety in sharing.

- When you think about your family right now, what's one word that comes to mind?
- What has surprised you most about how your family has responded to your diagnosis?
- Who in your family has been the easiest to talk to—and why?

Understanding the Content:

Purpose: These questions explore shifts in family dynamics without blame.

- How have roles in your family changed since cancer entered the picture?
- Have you noticed yourself taking on a different role than before—caretaker, decision-maker, peacemaker, or protector?
- What's one role you wish you didn't have to carry right now?
- How has cancer affected power, independence, or decision-making in your family?

Understanding Communication Patterns:

Purpose: Focus on how people talk—or don't talk—about cancer.

- What topics feel easy to talk about in your family right now? Which feel off-limits?
- How do family members show concern—through words, actions, silence, or something else?
- Have you noticed any differences between what you say and what you actually feel?
- What does 'good communication' look like to you right now?

Establishing Support and Boundaries:

Purpose: Encourages clarity and self-advocacy.

- In what ways does your family support you well?
- In what ways does their support miss the mark?
- What do you need more of from your family right now?
- What do you need less of?
- How comfortable are you asking for what you need?

Impact on Identity and Relationships:

Purpose: Explores meaning and connection.

- How has cancer changed the way you see yourself within your family?
- Has your diagnosis brought anyone closer—or created distance?
- What relationships feel stronger? Which feel more strained?
- How do you balance being a patient and being a parent/partner/sibling/child?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What has your family learned through this experience?
- What strengths have you discovered—in yourself or in your family?
- What kind of communication do you hope to build moving forward?
- What would feeling ‘supported enough’ look like for you?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can “pass” on any question.
- Reflect on themes you hear rather than problem-solve
- Keep medical explanations high-level unless asked for detail.
- Normalize differences: *“Many families cope very differently.”*
- Close sessions with a grounding question (e.g., “What’s one thing you’re taking with you from today?”)

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What are some ways someone can more deeply understand relationships in their support system?
2. What are some examples of boundary setting in survivorship/caregiving situations?
3. Identify which communication skills would likely lead to better boundary setting.
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief and guilt that are placed on family dynamics?
5. Name one of the myths and misconceptions Dr. Gastinel mentioned in the video.

Session 4 – Body Image

Learning Objectives

1. Define body image and how that has shifted developmentally through one's lifespan.
2. Gain knowledge of mental health impact on body image.
3. Understand how one's body image may affect self-image and relationships.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with the feelings of grief associated with physical changes in the body because of cancer and its treatment.

Recorded: Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBOyh7d6aEw>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Body Image
5	Defining body image and how that has shifted developmentally through one's lifespan.
10	Video clip – LLS Survivorship Series
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement management of expectations
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Body Image
10	Video clip – “A Survivor's Story” Dating, Relationships, Finding Love During Cancer Treatment
10	How to implement healthy mindset
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of the feelings of grief associated with physical changes in the body because of cancer and its treatment.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about body image.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: To ease individuals into the discussion.

- What's one word that describes how you feel in your body today?
- What does your body need most from you right now?
- Is there something that helped you feel even a little more comfortable in your body this week?

Understanding Changes in the Body:

Purpose: To normalize and support feelings around body image.

- What body changes have been hardest to talk about?
- In what ways do you feel like your body is different from how it used to be—physically or emotionally?
- Are there parts of your body you feel disconnected from? What does that feel like?
- How has cancer changed the way you recognize yourself

Understanding their Relationship with their Bodies:

Purpose: Focus on how people talk—or don't talk—about cancer.

- What messages have you learned (from society, family, or medicine) about how your body *should* look or function?
- How has your relationship with your body changed since diagnosis?
- Are there moments when you feel compassion for your body? What helps create those moments?
- What does "being kind to your body" mean for you right now?

Promoting Positive Self Talk:

Purpose: Encourages positive body image perception.

- What thoughts come up when you look at yourself in the mirror?
- How do you talk to your body when it feels disappointing, painful, or unfamiliar?
- Are there emotions you weren't expecting to feel about your body?
- What would you say to someone else experiencing the same body changes?

Impact on Identity and Relationships:

Purpose: Explores meaning and connection.

- How have body changes affected how you feel around other people?
- What has it been like to navigate intimacy, dating, or touch?
- Do you feel pressure to hide or explain your body? Where does that pressure come from?
- What support from others feels helpful—and what doesn't?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What has your family learned through this experience?
- What strengths have you discovered—in yourself or in your family?
- What kind of communication do you hope to build moving forward?
- What would feeling 'supported enough' look like for you?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can "pass" on any question.
- Normalize ambivalence: *"It's okay to have mixed feelings about your body."*
- Avoid forced positivity
- Invite creative responses (writing, metaphor, drawing).
- Close sessions with a grounding question (e.g., *"What's one thing you're taking with you from today?"*)

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What are common hallmarks of how body image shifts through one's lifespan?
2. True or False: Body image concerns are common and valid for people with cancer at any stage.
3. What are some ways one's own body image may affect inter-personal relationships?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with physical changes in the body because of cancer and its treatment?
5. Name two self-care strategies Dr. Gastinel listed in the video.

Session 5 – Diet/Exercise and Re-inventing Routine

Learning Objectives

1. Define the standard of care for diet and exercise surrounding a cancer diagnosis and treatment.
2. Gain knowledge of mindfulness and meditation, and how new coping skills can positively impact your diet and exercise routines.
3. Understand how diet and exercise can impact your mental health.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief associated with limits and changes to diet and exercise.

Recorded: Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsJqOU-Y3Z4>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Diet/Exercise and Re-inventing Routine
5	Defining the standard of care for diet and exercise surrounding a cancer diagnosis and treatment.
10	Video clip – The Ottawa Hospital: Nutrition During Cancer Treatment
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement realistic expectations
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Diet/Exercise and Re-inventing Routine
10	Video clip – TedTalk “Exercise Through Cancer Care” Karen Wonders
10	How to implement healthy routine and structure
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of feelings of grief associated with limits and changes to diet and exercise.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about diet/exercise and re-inventing routine.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: To ease individuals into the discussion.

- How is your body feeling today—physically and emotionally?
- What has felt supportive to your health this week, even in a small way?
- What does “*taking care of yourself*” look like for you right now?

Understanding Nutrition During Cancer:

Purpose: To understand the individual’s relationship with food and eating well.

- How has your relationship with food changed since diagnosis or treatment?
- What foods feel easiest or most comforting for you lately?
- Are there eating challenges you’re facing (appetite changes, nausea, fatigue, taste changes)?
- What advice about food have you found helpful—or unhelpful?
- How do you balance nutrition goals with pleasure and enjoyment of food?
- What’s one nourishing habit (not necessarily food-related) that supports your eating?

Understanding Exercise and Movement During Cancer::

Purpose: To understand the individual’s relationship with exercise and their physical health.

1. What kinds of movement feel good to your body right now?
2. How has your idea of “exercise” changed during or after treatment?
3. What barriers make movement harder for you (fatigue, pain, fear, time)?
4. How do you listen to your body when deciding how much is enough?
5. What counts as success for you when it comes to physical activity?
6. How do you adapt movement on low-energy days?

Promoting Positive Self Talk:

Purpose: Encourages positive emotional mindset.

- What emotions come up when you think about diet or exercise?
- Have you ever felt pressure or guilt around “*doing enough*” for your health?
- How do you practice self-compassion on days when plans don’t happen?
- What helps you stay motivated without being hard on yourself?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What's one takeaway from today's conversation?
- What's one gentle intention you're setting for the coming week?
- What support do you need right now—from yourself or others?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can “pass” on any question.
- Avoid forced opinions about diet and exercise plans.
- Encourage speaking to healthcare professionals about plans that are right for them.
- Close sessions with a grounding question (e.g., “What's one thing you're taking with you from today?”)

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What is one resource mentioned in the training for finding the most current guidelines and standards of care for diet and exercise surrounding a cancer diagnosis and treatment?
2. What are the ways mindfulness and meditation can help build coping skills?
3. True/False: It's safe for everyone with cancer to do high-intensity workouts daily.
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief associated with limits and changes to diet and exercise?
5. Name two stress reducing strategies Dr. Gastinel discussed in the video.

Session 6 – Relationships

Learning Objectives

1. Define the various nature of relationships in one's life and support system.
2. Gain knowledge of how to manage expectations of relationships during your cancer journey.
3. Understand how to navigate communication surrounding death and dying with your support system.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief when relationships shift and change during a cancer experience.

Recorded: Thursday, May 22, 2025

Video: <https://youtu.be/po591leJJ64>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Relationships
5	Defining the various nature of relationships in one's life and support system.
10	Video clip – Cancer.net Navigating Challenges: Finding Emotional Support After a Cancer Diagnosis
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement healthy communication skills
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Relationships
10	Video clip – TedTalk "Social Support as Cancer Therapy Matthew Lopez
10	How to implement healthy boundaries
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of feelings of grief when relationships shift and change during a cancer experience.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about relationships.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: To ease individuals into the discussion.

- How has your interpersonal relationships shifted during cancer?
- Who has felt supportive of your health this week, even in a small way?
- Are there things you wish you could tell your family or friends but find it difficult? Why?

Understanding Changes in Relationships:

Purpose: To understand the changes and seasons of relationships.

- How has cancer changed your relationships, positively or negatively?
- Have you noticed shifts in friendships or partnerships since your diagnosis?
- Are there relationships that have become stronger or weaker, and what do you think contributed to that?

Understanding Emotional Intimacy:

Purpose: To understand the individual's relationship with emotional intimacy in meaningful relationships.

- How comfortable are you sharing your fears or emotions with others?
- How do you maintain emotional closeness with your partner, family, or friends during treatment?
- Have you discovered new ways to connect with loved ones that you hadn't before?

Understanding Connection:

Purpose: Avoiding social isolation and fuel connection with other.

- Do you ever feel isolated or misunderstood by others because of your illness?
- What helps you feel connected to your community or support network?
- Are there new connections or friendships that have formed since your diagnosis?

Having Difficult Conversations:

Purpose: To confront conflict and promote healthy dialogue.

- Have you experienced tension or conflict in relationships since your diagnosis? How did you navigate it?
- Are there conversations you are avoiding? What would make it easier to approach them?
- How do you handle differing expectations from family or friends regarding your care or lifestyle?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What's one takeaway from today's conversation?
- What have you learned about yourself through the changes in your relationships?
- How has your cancer journey influenced the way you value or prioritize relationships?
- Are there ways you've found to foster stronger connections that you'd like to continue

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can "pass" on any question.
- Validate all experiences—every reaction is normal.
- Sometimes gentle prompts like "Would anyone like to share a success or challenge from the past week?" can open discussion.
- Be mindful that some topics may trigger strong emotions—offer grounding or breathing exercises if needed.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What are the ways it can be helpful to define the nature of relationships within one's support systems?
2. What are ways to manage expectations of relationships for people on their cancer journey?
3. What was one of the resources mentioned in the training that someone could use to navigate communication surrounding death and dying?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief when relationships shift and change during a cancer experience?
5. Dr. Gastinel mentioned several key aspects of navigating relationships during cancer, name two that stuck out to you.

Session 7 – Becoming and Empowered Patient

Learning Objectives

1. Define the standard of care for cancer patients.
2. Gain knowledge of ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making with a cancer diagnosis and treatment.
3. Understand how to utilize effective communication skills with your healthcare team.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief associated with a cancer diagnosis

Recorded: Thursday, May 29, 2025

Video: <https://youtu.be/tE5GtMFIKiM>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Becoming and Empowered Patient
5	Defining empowerment
10	Video clip – TedTalk “Becoming an Empowered Patient” David Silverstein
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement self-care
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Becoming and Empowered Patient
10	Video clip – Weill Cornell Medicine: Becoming an Empowered Patient
10	How to implement a personalized survivorship care plan
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of survivorship
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about becoming and empowered patient.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: These help people feel comfortable and set a tone of trust.

- Can you share one thing that gives you strength or hope right now?
- What is one small win you've had in your health journey this week or month?
- When you hear the word "empowered," what comes to mind for you personally?

Understanding Individual and Shared Experiences:

Purpose: Encourages self-reflection and shared empathy.

- What has been the most challenging part of your cancer journey so far?
- Are there moments when you've felt in control of your health? Can you describe one?
- How do you navigate uncertainty or fear in your journey?

Explore Knowledge Base:

Purpose: Focuses on education and self-advocacy.

- What questions do you wish you could ask your doctors or care team but haven't?
- How do you decide which treatment or wellness options are right for you?
- Are there tools, books, websites, or communities that have helped you feel more informed?

Building Support Through Community:

Purpose: Encourages sharing strategies and fostering community.

- How do you explain your needs to family, friends, or caregivers?
- What kind of support has been most meaningful to you?
- Can you share one tip or coping strategy that's worked well for you?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What's one takeaway from today's conversation?
- What is one insight you're taking away from today's conversation?
- Is there a message of encouragement you'd like to share with the group?
- What's one action you can take this week to support your wellbeing?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can “pass” on any question.
- Emphasize confidentiality and respect.
- You can adapt questions for shorter check-ins or longer sessions.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What is one resource mentioned in the training for finding the most current guidelines and standards of care for cancer patients?
2. Who can you turn to if you have questions about ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making with a cancer diagnosis and treatment?
3. What are some communication skills that could be helpful when working with your health-care team?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief associated with a cancer diagnosis?
5. Dr. Gastinel talked about personalized care, name two strategies that you can start now to become an empowered patient.

Session 8 – Spirituality

Learning Objectives

1. Define one's spiritual belief system.
2. Gain knowledge of ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making with a spiritual awareness.
3. Understand death and dying in relation to your spiritual belief system.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with feelings of grief all throughout the cancer continuum.

Recorded: Thursday, June 26, 2025

Video: <https://youtu.be/G62TCAW0-Qg>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Spirituality
5	Defining one's spiritual belief system.
10	Video clip – Dana-Farber Cancer Institute: Spirituality and Cancer Survivors
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement an open-minded belief system
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Spirituality
10	Video clip – TedTalk “Depression and Spiritual Awakening” Lisa Miller
10	How to implement routine of spirituality
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of feelings of grief all throughout the cancer continuum.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about spirituality.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: These help people feel comfortable and set a tone of trust.

- Can you share one thing that gives you strength or hope right now?
- What is one small win you've had in your health journey this week or month?
- When you hear the word "empowered," what comes to mind for you personally?

Understanding Individual and Shared Experiences:

Purpose: Encourages self-reflection on their individual spiritual beliefs.

- What does spirituality mean to you personally?
- Has your sense of spirituality changed since your cancer diagnosis? If so, how?
- Are there particular practices or beliefs that bring you comfort during difficult times?

Finding Strength in Spirituality:

Purpose: Focuses on coping skills and belief system.

- How has your spirituality supported you in coping with cancer?
- Are there spiritual or reflective practices that help you find peace or strength?
- Can you share a time when your spiritual beliefs helped you through a challenging moment?

Understanding Connection:

Purpose: Encourages connection through shared beliefs and open mindedness.

- Do you feel connected to something larger than yourself (e.g., community, nature, higher power)?
- How do your spiritual beliefs affect your relationships with family, friends, or others?
- Are there ways your spirituality helps you feel less alone during this journey?

Promoting Self Reflection

Purpose: Promotes self-reflection and existential thinking.

- Has facing cancer changed the way you see life, death, or purpose?
- Are there spiritual questions you are currently exploring or struggling with?
- How do you find hope or meaning in everyday life now?

Encouraging Practice:

Purpose: Sharing spiritual practices that promote positivity.

- Are there rituals, prayers, meditation, or other practices that help you feel centered?
- How do you integrate your spirituality into your medical treatments or daily routines
- Are there books, music, or activities that nurture your spiritual side?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: End with grounding and possibility.

- What's one takeaway from today's conversation?
- What is one insight you're taking away from today's conversation?
- Is there a spiritual message or lesson you would like to share with the group?
- What's one action you can take this week to engage in your spirituality?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Remind individuals they can "pass" on any question.
- Keep the atmosphere non-judgmental, people may have very different beliefs.
- Encourage listening as much as sharing; sometimes hearing others' experiences is healing.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. Why can it be important to define one's spiritual belief system in the context of cancer care?
2. Why can it be important to define one's spiritual belief system in the context of death and dying?
3. What are some of the ethical considerations when making decisions based on someone's spiritual belief system?
4. What are some ways you would address cultural and spiritual considerations when dealing with feelings of grief all throughout the cancer continuum?
5. What are two helpful points to consider when doing a spiritual assessment that Dr. Gastinel discussed in the video?

Session 9 – Mental Health Awareness

Learning Objectives

1. Define the standard of care for mental health care in the cancer experience.
2. Gain knowledge of the ethical considerations, consent, and confidentiality for decision making with mental health counseling.
3. Understand death and dying from a mental health perspective.
4. Discuss the cultural and spiritual considerations with grief counseling.

Recorded: Friday, June 27, 2025

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hRfQ6qhIE4>

Outline

Part 1 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
5	Overview of the topic of the month – Mental Health Awareness
5	Defining the standard of care for mental health care in the cancer experience.
10	Video clip – TedTalk “Stop the Stigma: Why it’s Important to Talk about Mental Health” Heather Sarkis
15	Processing the video clip
10	How to implement self-care
15	Psychosocial Oncology Mental Health Interventions.

BREAK (5mins)

Part 2 (1hr)

Minutes	Content
15	Deep dive into the topic of the month – Mental Health Awareness
10	Video clip – TedTalk “Is There a Link Between Cancer and Stress” Cort Davies
10	How to implement mental health and wellness
10	Myths and misconceptions
10	Ethical, cultural, and spiritual considerations of grief counseling.
5	Closing comments

Live/Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Minutes	Content
5	Participant introductions (name, role, organization)
5	Overview of the content that was presented in the recorded session about mental health awareness.
15	Discussion of the recorded content, reactions from participants.
15	Case study – breakout sessions
15	Q&A
5	Evaluations and closing comments

Discussion Points to Consider:

Opening the Discussion:

Purpose: Warm-up and help participants feel safe sharing.

- How has your week been emotionally, physically, or mentally?
- Can you share one small thing that brought you comfort or joy recently?
- On a scale of 1-10, how are you feeling today? Why?

Understanding Emotional Awareness:

Purpose: Help participants articulate feelings and normalize mental health struggles.

- What has been the most challenging emotion you've faced since your diagnosis or treatment?
- Are there feelings you've noticed but find difficult to talk about?
- How do you cope when anxiety, fear, or sadness arises?

Sharing Personal Experiences:

Purpose: Build empathy and community.

- Can you share a moment when you felt supported during your cancer journey?
- What is one thing you wish others understood about your experience?
- How has your perception of mental health changed since your diagnosis?

Identifying Coping Strategies:

Purpose: Encourage practical mental health strategies.

- What coping strategies have helped you manage stress or anxiety?
- How do you care for your mental health on difficult days?
- Are there new activities or routines you've found comforting?

Addressing Stigmas and Biases:

Purpose: Address challenges in discussing mental health.

- Have you faced stigma or misunderstanding around your mental health or cancer experience?
- How do you explain your feelings or needs to family and friends?
- What support do you wish you had from others?

Encouraging Practice:

Purpose: Sharing spiritual practices that promote positivity.

- Are there rituals, prayers, meditation, or other practices that help you feel centered?
- How do you integrate your spirituality into your medical treatments or daily routines?
- Are there books, music, or activities that nurture your spiritual side?

Closing this Session:

Purpose: Consolidate discussion and leave on a positive or hopeful note.

- What is one insight or takeaway from today's session?
- Can you name one thing you'll try this week to support your mental health?
- Is there a positive moment from this week that you can share with the group?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Always acknowledge emotions and validate experiences.
- Encourage sharing but never force it.
- Use open-ended questions to promote deeper reflection.
- Include moments of hope or coping strategies to balance heavy discussions.

Learning Assessment Questions

1. What is one resource mentioned in the training for finding the most current guidelines and standards of care for mental health care in the cancer experience?
2. What are some of the ethical considerations when making decisions regarding mental health counseling?
3. Why is it important to understand death and dying from a mental health perspective?
4. What are some cultural and spiritual considerations when providing grief counseling?
5. Name two of the mental health support strategies Dr Gastinel listed in the video.

Evaluation Questions for Peer Support Group Sessions

1. How did you hear about this peer support group?
2. Were you already connected to this group before today's session?
3. How would you describe yourself (check all that apply):
 - Survivor
 - Caregiver
 - Healthcare provider
 - Advocate
 - Friend/community member
4. When did you watch the video?
 - Before the session
 - During the session
 - I did not watch the video
5. On a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied):
 - How satisfied were you with knowledge and presentation skills of the presenter?
 - How satisfied were you with the content of the training?
 - How satisfied were you with any materials provided?
 - How satisfied were you with accommodations of the group session?
6. What topics would you like to see included at future training programs?



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